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Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is hereby circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[2 February 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Iranian involvement in the persecution of the Bahá'ís in Yemen

Iranian involvement in the persecution of the Bahá'ís in Sana'a is corroborated by several facts.

1. Reports by multiple independent sources among the Yemeni authorities in Sana'a

Multiple independent sources have, since 2016 and through their conversations with various officials in Yemen, repeatedly confirmed that Iranian authorities are directing efforts to persecute the Bahá'ís in Yemen, which has included pressure to deport those of Iranian descent to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Notwithstanding the fact that a limited number of fair-minded Houthi authorities have behaved in favour of the Bahá'ís, a few specific individuals, namely Abdulrab Jurfan, (commonly referred to as Abu Taha), the head of the National Security Office (or "Bureau" in UN reports) and Mutlaq Al-Murani, (known as Abu Emad), the Deputy-Head of the same Office as well as Mr. Rajeh Zayed from the Prosecutor's Office, have displayed antithetical behaviours against the Bahá'ís and are reported by multiple individuals in Yemen to be receiving instructions from Iran in order to persecute the Bahá'í community. In addition to these specifically-named individuals, the authorities in Iran and those presently ruling in Sana'a are held accountable for supporting and consenting to blatant acts of persecution against the Bahá'ís in Yemen.

In July 2017 unconfirmed reports indicated that the Iranian Embassy was aggressively interfering in the process of ending the persecution of the Baha'is in Yemen.

2. Resemblance of the persecution of the Bahá'ís in Yemen to persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran

The various forms of persecution experienced by Yemeni Baha'is bear a striking resemblance to what the Baha'is of Iran have experienced in their country, such as the baseless accusation, used when Baha'is are arrested, that they are somehow a threat to national security and are spies of Israel. Furthermore, the authorities in both Iran and in Sana'a, Yemen are explicitly targeting the leadership of the Bahá'í community. The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ahmed Shaheed, has himself commented on the striking resemblance of the persecution of Bahá'ís Yemen to that against Bahá'ís in Iran.

3. Persecution despite the Bahá'í community's strong ties with local tribes and peoples

The Bahá'í community in Yemen is also known to have had, over the last decade or so, strong relationships with several tribes, including the Houthis, and individuals, which exist in stark contradiction with the consistently increasing persecution against the Bahá'ís.

Many examples testify to such relationships. For instance, in 2 May 2016, Major General Jalal-Ali al-Rawyashan, the Minister of the Interior wrote a letter to the Chairman of the Supreme Revolutionary Council, Mr. Muhammad-'Ali al-Houthi, as well as on 9 January 2017 to Mr. Saleh al-Samad, the Chairman of the Supreme Political Council, requesting a presidential pardon for Mr. Haydara and that he be released from prison. In addition, the Attorney General, Diyauddin Baghdadi, wrote to the Head of National Security on 17 January 2017 to the Head of National Security requesting the release of Mr. Ghaderi. On 17 May 2017 hundreds of Yemenis, led by tribal leaders and human rights activists, approached the Specialized Criminal Prosecution building demanding the release of Mr. Walid Ayyash. A few days letter, tribal leaders signed a strong statement denouncing the persecution activities and calling for investigation by the judiciary into the actions of Mr. Rajeh Zayyed, the public prosecutor that has consistently persecuted the Bahá'ís. In July and August 2017 it was reported that Mr. Saleh al-Samad ordered Abu Emad at National Security to release the Bahá'ís, to no effect. In addition to the above, lawyers supportive of the Bahá'ís have been making repeated efforts with the authorities.

Little explanation can be provided for the unresponsiveness of the Yemeni authorities in Sana'a to such public pressure other than consistent interference from the outside.

4. A matter of Iranian policy

Iranian involvement in the persecution of the Bahá'ís in Yemen is consistent with a general policy aimed at dealing with "The Baha'i Question" as outlined in a once secret 1991 government memorandum.

That memorandum, endorsed by Iran's Supreme Leader, outlines a wide range of economic, educational, and social measures aimed at "blocking the development" of the Iranian Baha'is. It also explicitly states the intention of Iranian authorities to "confront and destroy their [the Baha'is'] cultural roots outside the country [Iran]" (see link).

5. Evidence of Iranian involvement abroad

Furthermore, there are indications that Iranian authorities have demonstrated prejudicial behaviours against the Baha`is in other countries outside of Iran. In addition, many reports in the general media strongly suggest Iran's involvement in the conflict taking place in Yemen.